

Cuomo should honor vow to protect vital programs

As the mom of a 23-year-old daughter with multiple disabilities, I read with horror the recent News article regarding the eight individuals living in horrible conditions. I could not help but wonder: How many more similar situations are out there that haven't been identified? The fact that they were happy just to have a roof over their heads sickened me!

Last year, The News printed a story of a 66-year-old woman with developmental disabilities who was rescued from living in her brother's barn. She was physically and mentally abused including being shot by a BB gun. Her parents raised her in a loving home, but after their death, that loving environment no longer existed.

In 2008, New York State placed a moratorium on the building of group residences for individuals with developmental disabilities. Furthermore, it will no longer be investing in "brick and mortar" construction. As of April 1, 2013, state reports indicate more than 12,000 individuals waiting for appropriate residential options. These individuals, along with thousands of people across the state, by no choice of their own, have lifetime disabilities.

Family caregivers are aging and are in constant duress struggling with questions like: What will happen when I die or am no longer able to care for my child? Who will provide care with respect and dignity, ensuring they are not harmed, and that they are happy? Without the appropriate care plan and oversight, stories like these will continue and citizens should not tolerate it. Families are in crisis and they need help now.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo made a promise to protect programs for the most vulnerable populations. We currently have a surplus in excess of \$7.5 billion. Governor, please honor your promise!

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